

OBITUARY

PROF. R.M. NAIK

Prof. Ramesh M. Naik tragically passed away on 8 December 1991 in Rajkot. He was suffering from broncho-pneumonia for some time before he died. He is survived by his wife and son.

At the time of his untimely death, he had retired as the Head of the Department of Biosciences at Saurashtra University, and was actively working to set up a special department at the University, dealing with a variety of subjects related to Ocean Science and Culture.

Prof. Naik was born on 2 May 1931. He earned his doctorate for his work on avian muscle structure and physiology from the M.S. University of Baroda in 1959. He was awarded a Smith/Mundt Fulbright Fellowship at the Michigan State University from 1961-62. He was Lecturer and Reader in Zoology at the University at Baroda for several years before taking over as a Professor at the Department of Biosciences at Saurashtra University at Rajkot, where he worked for 13 years.

His first love was swifts, but he worked extensively on the house sparrow, blue rock pigeon, babblers and forest species. He supervised several masters and doctorate students covering a variety of disciplines of zoology, ornithology, ichthyology and entomology. His interest in colonial waterbirds covered various aspects of the breeding strategies, feeding ecology, habitat utilization and conservation plans of resident species of herons and allies, waders, terns and migrant waterfowl. His work has been published in several national and international journals and magazines of repute.

He served with distinction on the editorial committees of *Colonial Waterbirds*, the *Journal*

of the BNHS, *Proceedings of the Indian Academy of Sciences* and other journals, and was founding editor of *Pavo — the Journal of Indian Ornithology*.

He was a member of the faculty of science of many universities in India, and a Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union. He participated in and advised several regional and national committees on science, economic ornithology and conservation. He was a member of the scientific committees of the BNHS and Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History.

Prof. Naik was not only a scientist but also a conservationist. He was a member and advisor of the WWF regional committee for Saurashtra and freely gave his time to both conservation activities and scientific enquiry. An able, confident man who could not stomach fools, he was outspoken and frank, well above the level of politics and petty jealousies that haunt the corridors of many institutions. His endearing sense of humour and politeness never deserted him even in bad health and he took everything in his stride, never getting flustered.

Where work was concerned, he was a hard taskmaster, expecting 100% from his students. He was a mentor to many; friend, advisor and father figure to his students. He commanded great respect from friends and colleagues, and could get an almost impossible task accomplished with a casual request. Such was his personality. His untimely death is a great loss to Indian ornithology.

TAEJ MUNDKUR
RISHAD NAOROJI